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**Board Governance Policy Cross Reference:** [1, 9, 12, 13](#)

**Administrative Procedures Cross Reference:**

**Form Cross Reference:**

[Student-Specific Plan \(SSP\) Form in Clevr](#)

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**Legal/Regulatory Reference:**

[The Public Schools Act](#)

[The Education Administration Act](#)

[The Human Rights Code](#)

[The Protecting and Supporting Children \(Information Sharing\) Act](#)

[The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

[Standards for Appropriate Educational programming in Manitoba \(2022\)](#)

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Students who attend school regularly are more engaged in learning, have a greater opportunity to access school and community resources, have a greater sense of belonging, and are more likely to reach their full potential. Student presence and engagement is required for success.

Student absence is a serious impediment to a student's educational performance and well-being. Absenteeism can have lasting negative impacts on student achievement, graduation rates, transition to post-secondary education, employment, and social inclusion, as well as on the community at large.

The Interlake School Division (ISD) commits to work across the system to enhance student presence and engagement.

### **A. Definitions and Terminology**

**Presence:** When a student attends and participates in the school or classroom on the days in which they are required. This is an entry point to being able to engage students in the process of learning. Students may be present even if they are not physically within a classroom, depending on their student-specific plan.

**Engagement:** Students' attitudes towards schooling, their attendance and participation in school activities, disposition towards learning, and working and socializing with others in school. Engagement is

expressed in students' feelings that they belong at school, and in their participation in school activities ([OECD, 2003](#)).

**Regular Attendance:** Coming to school and/or participating in learning consistently and on a routine, habitual basis, missing no more than five days for the entire school year or course.

**Absence:** Any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion.

- **Excused Absence** refers to any time that a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/ expulsion) with the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.
- **Unexcused Absence** refers to any time a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/ expulsion) without the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.

**Chronic Absenteeism:** Where unexcused absences account for 10 or more classes in a single high school course or 10 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.

**Severe Chronic Absenteeism:** Where unexcused absences account for 20 or more classes in a single high school course or 20 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.

**Student-Specific Plan (SSP):** A planning, record-keeping, and communication document, as outlined in [Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba \(MEECL, 2022\)](#). Student-specific planning is a process through which members of student support teams meet the unique needs of individual students; it may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming.

## B. Roles and Responsibilities

Collectively, we share responsibility to facilitate and promote student presence and engagement with a focus on identifying and removing barriers early. Students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, and divisional staff all play vital roles.

### Students

- are responsible to attend school and classes regularly and punctually
- must comply with the school's code of conduct, and complete assignments and other related work required by teachers
- participate in student-specific planning as developmentally appropriate
  - Note: It is recognized that elementary-age students are more dependent on their parents to help them attend school regularly.

### Parents

- have the right to be informed regularly of the attendance, behaviour, and academic achievement of their child in school, and to participate in planning
- are responsible for cooperating fully with the child's teachers and other employees of the school division to ensure the child complies with the school's code of conduct
- must take all reasonable measures to ensure the child attends school regularly

## **Teachers**

- are responsible for monitoring and recording student attendance
- are responsible for timely communication to the principal and the parent
- identify potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism
- promote and support regular attendance
- communicate (verbally and in writing, if needed) with students and parents when concerns related to attendance arise
- document steps taken to communicate with students, parents, and outside agencies when concerns related to attendance arise
- participate in the student-specific planning process

## **Principals/Designates**

- are responsible to work with teachers, students, parents, and others, as needed, to promote regular attendance, including identifying supports in response to student absences
- ensure teachers maintain accurate attendance records
- monitor and review student attendance data and oversee the student-specific planning process, including the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing chronic absenteeism
- report chronic/severe absenteeism to the school division
- invite community agencies, organizations and associations, other education authorities, and regional health and children's services authorities to plan collaboratively in support of appropriate educational programming and planning for students
- lead school-based attendance initiatives

## **School Division**

- ensure students who are eligible for enrolment with the division receive regular and appropriate educational programming
- work with schools, parents, and community and other partners to ensure that students are regularly present
- ensure that schools track student attendance accurately, document any students who are chronically absent, and take immediate, sustained action to address causes of chronic absenteeism until the student is regularly present
- work with schools and agencies to identify supports and interventions to help meet both the educational and non-educational needs of students and families to ensure regular school attendance, such as through coordinated services
- ensure culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence among all staff

## **C. Enhancing Proactive and Preventative Attendance Practices**

Schools must conduct immediate, personal outreach to students whose absence is unexcused or a cause for concern. Taking a proactive response to even a day of absence creates opportunities to provide supports and intervention before absenteeism becomes persistent. This includes and is not limited to the following:

- school notifying parent(s) via voicemail/automated system; and
- if absence persists, a personal contact from the teacher or designate to better understand the nature of the absence and proactively identify strategies in response to barriers.

Preventative practices to enhance student engagement, well-being, and success can include the following:

- creating a safe, welcoming, and culturally responsive school environment for students;
- addressing gaps in nutrition and basic needs;
- improving student and parent/guardian engagement with school; and/or
- enhancing visibility of staff at transition times throughout the school.

#### **D. Documenting, Monitoring, Analyzing, and Reporting**

ISD schools will:

- ensure consistent, daily recording procedures on student presence and absence, including whether absences are excused or unexcused;
- monitor enrolment data to ensure that all students expected to be present are in school. This includes comparing enrolment registers year over year, as well as reviewing unclaimed pupil files and homeschool reports from the department;
- discuss student presence and absence at school-based Student Support Team meetings;
- designate a case manager to investigate and identify the causes of student absences and determine the appropriate supports that are required to promote regular attendance; and
- implement an early warning system and non-punitive outreach protocols to identify students who are likely to experience chronic absenteeism.
  - For Kindergarten to Grade 8:
    - the School Administrative Assistant will make daily contact with parents/guardians for unexcused absences by phone within the first instructional block (60 minutes) of morning classes;
    - the Teacher will notify parents/guardians by phone or email whenever a student absence is a cause for concern;
    - the Teacher will notify parents/guardians by phone or email when a student absence reaches the **chronic absenteeism** level; and
    - the Teacher will notify the Principal by email when a student absence reaches the **chronic absenteeism** level.
  - For Grade 9 to Grade 12:
    - schools will use the SchoolMessenger automatic dialler to make daily contact by phone with parents/guardians for unexcused absences;
    - the Teacher will notify parents/guardians by phone or email whenever a student absence is a cause for concern;
    - the Teacher will notify parents/guardians by phone or email when a student absence reaches the **chronic absenteeism** level; and
    - the Teacher will notify the Principal by email when a student absence reaches the **chronic absenteeism** level.
  - For Kindergarten to Grade 12, the Principal will:
    - monitor and review student attendance data; and
    - oversee the student-specific planning process, including the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing **chronic absenteeism**.

ISD Divisional Staff will:

- monitor and analyze division-wide and school-specific enrollment and attendance data;
- ensure that student attendance is a standing agenda item at Senior Administration and Admin Council meetings;
- assess the need for a divisional attendance committee as a mechanism to ensure that student absenteeism is monitored and that responsive planning is in place; and
- report Provincial enrollment data as required.

## E. Response to Chronic Absenteeism

Responses to absences must be non-punitive, fair, and predictable for all students. ISD will not use suspensions, expulsions, or withdrawal from programming as a response to absenteeism.

When a student experiences **chronic absenteeism**:

- The Teacher will:
  - notify parents/guardians by phone or email when student absence reaches the **chronic absenteeism** level; and
  - notify the Principal by email when a student absence reaches the **chronic absenteeism** level.
- The Principal will:
  - notify the school-based Student Support Team of the student who is chronically absent; and
  - designate a case manager to lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of a student-specific plan (SSP).
- The Case Manager will:
  - initiate a meeting of the school team, the parent/guardian, and any external agency involved with the student in order to identify the student-specific barriers affecting attendance and the strategies in place to respond to these barriers;
  - document the SSP process; and
  - monitor student presence and engagement.

When a student experiences **severe chronic absenteeism**:

- The Case Manager will:
  - notify the school-based Student Support Team when student absence reaches the **severe chronic absenteeism** level;
  - initiate a meeting of the school team, the parent/guardian, and any external agency involved with the student in order to review, evaluate and update the SSP;
  - document the SSP process; and
  - monitor student presence and engagement.

If **severe chronic absenteeism** persists:

- The Case Manager will:
  - contact Child and Family Services (CFS) if there are concerns about student safety and well-being;
  - notify the Principal when absenteeism reaches 30%; and
  - provide the Principal with the SSP and supporting information.
  
- The Principal will:
  - contact ISD's Student Services Administrator when absenteeism reaches 30%; and
  - provide ISD's Student Services Administrator with the SSP and supporting information.
  
- The Student Services Administrator will:
  - review the SSP and supporting information as provided by the Principal; and
  - contact Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning's *School and Community Support Unit* via formal written notification.
  
- The School and Community Support Unit will:
  - connect with the school division; and
  - support planning through consultation and collaboration with interdepartmental contacts and community service agencies.

### **Systemic Chronic Absenteeism**

A divisional presence and engagement committee may be considered as a mechanism to ensure that student absenteeism is monitored, and that responsive planning is in place. Committees at the school level are also recommended where feasible. The focus of a response to systemic chronic absenteeism should always be on inviting students back and finding the necessary resources to support attendance.